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Catalyst

Visioning Workshop Report: Community Driven Approaches to Research in Technology & Society

This workshop on community based research in computing, sponsored by the CCC and the MacArthur Foundation, was held on May 8 and 9 2023, bringing together 53 people, roughly half are scholars in computing at universities, nonprofits and industry, and half are advocates of communities and members of communities whose lives are impacted by the use of AI systems.

[Report](#)



Workshop Organizers:
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Workshop Goals

The goals of the workshop were to bring together researchers in computing and people who have intimate knowledge of the impacts of AI systems either through their lived experiences or work on advocacy to:

- Build a coalition comprising community partners and academic researchers studying the societal impact of automated decision making in society
- Identify key research questions and directions for progress along the areas identified in the Blueprint for an AI Bill of Rights
- Establish partnerships between advocates and researchers to push forward the principles and expectations articulated in the workshop.

Research Directions

Workshop activities outlined three ways research can support community needs:

- Understanding the broader context in which a sociotechnical system is deployed, and how it will impact people, and identify harms created by AI technologies.
- Using counter-programming to operate surveillance programs to monitor entities conducting surveillance.
- Engaging in positive visions and tools for empowerment so that technology can bring good instead of harm.

Recommendations

1. Broad Recommendations on Ensuring Ethical Community-Based Research

Participants recommended creating incentives or guidelines to require researchers to obtain ethical approval for research that involves gathering community data through surveys or surveillance.

2. Recommendations for Funding Agencies

Participants suggested that funding agencies should require impact reports if communities will be impacted by the research being developed. They also advised funding agencies to seek to incentivize the longer-term, hard and slow work that builds relationships and design metrics for evaluation appropriately, rather than solely relying on metrics like publications and presentations.

3. Recommendations Directed at Individual Researchers

Participants provided advice on how researchers can have meaningful and respectful interactions with community partners such as listening first, following up with the community after research is complete and prioritizing project leadership. Meaningful community-oriented academic research should acknowledge the variability in the sources of the problems and the ways in which different people are affected.

Conclusion

Collaborations between researchers in computing and the communities who are first to experience the negative impacts of AI systems can result in research directions that prevent the development of harmful AI systems, mitigate the harms of current AI systems more effectively, and build tools that prioritize human welfare.

How to Cite this Report

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